

WORKERS' COMPENSATION COMMISSION
Monday, March 6, 2006

SUBCOMMITTEE ON PUBLIC SAFETY AND ADMINISTRATION
Chairperson: Joan Cadden

Issues

Personnel Vacancies:

The Chairman should comment on what measures are being taken to ensure that the personnel department is able to hire and retain qualified employees.

WCC Response: The Workers' Compensation Commission acknowledges that it has had difficulties with filling vacancies. The difficulties have been exacerbated by the delay in hiring a qualified Personnel Director. However, with the hiring of the new Personnel Director in October, the agency has filled three vacant positions and is currently at some stage of the recruiting process for five other positions. In order to hire and retain quality employees, the agency has reclassified some positions to make them comparable and competitive with the market. There are still some positions that the agency believes are inappropriately classified and it is working to reorganize and fill these positions.

Web Initiative and Other Technology Efficiency Improvements:

The Chairman should comment on the plans for technology development at WCC and the future size and skill set of WCC's workforce considering the paper to electronic submission system shift.

WCC Response: With the implementation of the web initiative, the agency anticipates a reduction in manual processes. Over the last several years, keeping the web initiative in mind, the agency has been slowly re-structuring its divisions. Attrition has been used to reduce the workforce in lower skilled positions where automation efficiencies have been implemented. As the workload continues to decrease, staff are being reallocated to those areas where there is a match of skills. In the last two years when vacancies opened up, the agency would utilize internal recruiting methods to fill lower skilled jobs. The composition of the agency is expected to shift from a lower skilled workforce to a more skilled and professional workforce. We will need additional programmers, analysts, statisticians, etc. The agency has also been taking advantage of other creative means in order to fill its human resource needs. For example, the agency has utilized the Workmatters program (Workmatters is a program that is founded by local, state and Federal monies to help individuals get work skills training so that they can either enter or re-enter the work force) to fill clerical needs until the workload decreases sufficiently;

certain functions have also been outsourced; and the agency has used temporary services to fill specific short-term needs.

The agency plans on updating its Integrated Voice Response System in order to facilitate telephone access of claim status for electronic claims. As part of the electronic submission of the claim form, the agency will be producing an audio webcast that will instruct non-represented injured workers on how to submit a claim through the internet. In addition, demonstrations will be given at the regional hearing sites. The initiative already provides prompts (with pop-up windows) during the filing process to assist users in filing a claim. The agency will also be opening up the subscription service of the web initiative to additional users. Once additional users have access, we will promote using the electronic services to the community. Since January 2006, when the agency provided web access to policy coverage information, daily usage has grown to several thousand per day. We expect this to increase as more members of the community become familiar with this service.

In the future, the WCC hopes that Network MD will expand its capabilities to remote network monitoring. Also, the agency is interested in pursuing Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) in the transmission of first reports of injury documents as well as subsequent reports of injury. There are many benefits that EDI would provide including the possibility of capturing cost information that would allow the agency to analyze and share changes/trends in Maryland's workers' compensation system. EDI would also allow the agency to collect data in a manner that is less burdensome on its stakeholders and further reducing the number of documents that are handled by the agency. Finally, the agency sees a need to plan on electronically capturing all non-claim documents that are essential to retain (such as self-insurance files, personnel files, vocational rehabilitation applications, etc.) In the case of a disaster, the records would still exist.